



“MY GOD RECYCLES”

by Dr. D.A. Farmer, Pastor

Scripture – John 21:15-17

This morning I would like to invite you to turn with me to what I believe is one of the most famous chapters in our entire Bible, John chapter 3. When you hear someone mention John 3, what verse comes to you mind? But of course, verse 16. Let us repeat it together. ***“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”***

This is a beautiful verse. Probably repeated more than any other verse in the entire Bible. But I thought it was about time someone preached on the verse that falls within it's shadowed, John 3:17. Please focus your mind on the following verse: “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

This sermon you are about to hear was to be the final chapter in my book “Power Witnessing”. For you that have not read the book yet, this sermon will give you a small foretaste of what it's all about. Some of the stories you are about to hear I heard preached by Pastor Ron Halverson Jr. I knew I needed them in my book on witnessing. So with his and his father's permission, I included them in the final chapter. I knew they would get my point across very nicely. Problem was that Review and Herald thought it made my book too large so they did not include this chapter. So I felt I might bring it to you this morning.

One day I came home from school and as my custom was I went straight to my room. Right away - I knew my mother had been in my room. And she had been cleaning. For you see, I saw that many of my prize possessions were missing. And I knew where they were! So I quickly ran out to the trashcan and sure enough, there in the bottom of the trashcan laid my treasures.

There was my paper towel roll. This makes a great sword or a telescope, or a trumpet! And there was my chicken bone collection, (true story). I had been collecting those chicken bones for years. Who knew when I might find some hungry dog that would need them? And there was my one good old tennis shoe. So what if I only had the right one. You never knew when I find another one that might come close to matching it. What heal could have even thought about throwing it away?

And what's this? My rattlesnake “Rattler” collection. Surely mother has to remember that those rattlesnakes had to sacrifice a lot just so I could have this prize collection. Mother no, you couldn't, you wouldn't, you didn't, not my favorite cowboy hat! So what if it has a few holes in it and is a little dirty. This hat and I have been over the badlands. Hunted down a lot of bad guys! Rustled a lot of cattle together. Been thrown off of my stick horse too many times to count.

How could mom throw all these treasures away? Couldn't she see how valuable all this stuff is to me? I remember gathering up all my treasures in my arms and taking them back to my room where they belonged. After I was through there wasn't very much trash left. Only the stuff mother had cleaned out from my sister room. But I would let her worry about her own treasures.



Not everyone in this room may understand the verse John 3:17. You may not see a need of a sermon coming from it. And you won't if you are one of those who have never fallen! You will not understand a sermon coming from this verse if you are one of those who has never slipped and made a mistake now and then and are intolerant of those who have. You may not appreciate this sermon if you live a life that is trouble free and have a marriage that is made in heaven. Live a life that could pass the white glove test! If you believe God is pretty lucky to have you on His team and that you are God's gift to His church. If you are one of those perfect people that has not sinned in the last five years. You probably understand better than anyone else what Jesus meant in Matt. 9:12 when He said: "***The well need not a physician***". I guess what He was trying to say was that a sinless sheep doesn't need a Shepherd and that a spotless saint never needs to be preached at. But this verse and sermon is for the rest of us.

It's for those who know what it feels like to stub their toe, slip and fall flat on their face. For those who make a mistake now and then. Those of us that have a past that is not pure. This sermon is for those of us that have not always been the perfect spouse, parent, child, or Christian. This sermon is for those of us that did not want to fail God but did. This sermon is for those that know what God says about forgiveness but can't seem to believe Him. Knows what grace is all about but has never truly experienced it or been able to share it with others. It's for those that have tasted the "Forbidden Fruit". This sermon is as simple as its title "My God Recycles". And it starts up on a human garbage dump of a hill where there stands three crosses.

And around these crosses we find soldiers gambling for the garment of the One condemned Man hanging in the middle. We hear doomed thieves cursing. We find chief priests scattered among the crowd announcing: "He saved others; let Him save Himself." We find some shouting; "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And Jesus died there on that human garbage dump hill! He died there condemned but not condemning! The verse says, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Friends, that is why Christ died in that dump! He erected His cross up on the city garbage dump because "He Recycles".

Some fear a message coming from this verse. Why you ask? Because if God recycles like He claims He does then who or what kind of person will He bring into the church? And not only bring into the church, but also welcome them with open arms. Might even let them hold an office in the church someday, or speak from His sacred pulpit. If God recycles like He says He does then we will not have a church of exclusive saints, there will be sinners among God's chosen people.

Sometimes I feel that we want to be known as a church that believes, preaches, teaches, about ten rules etched in stone more than a church that has sinners in its pews.

Some like the church nice and tidy and like to go through the church sorting the trash out. You know, getting rid of the unwanted, unlovable and trouble makers. Some refuse to accept the fact that it is in the rubbish dumpster where Jesus finds His most prize possessions, His treasures.

Today, we live in a time when recycling" is very popular. A time when we want to save and salvage everything. Iowa has many recycling plans. They charge a nickel deposit on every aluminum can or plastic bottle. Then they have a most unique plan they call "Junk Day or Junking." This is where people place in his or her front yard any unwanted item they might



have. Items no longer of any use to them. They place them outside for others to go through. They do this two times a year. Several church members and myself would load up our cars with all sorts of perfectly good items. I would take these items home and clean them up, paint them if I needed to. Put new items on them if they needed them. In my workshop today you will find some of those treasures.

If only God's Church could catch on to this plan. You know what I mean? Go out and find God's treasures and bring them back to His workshop. A place where God can clean, repaint, transform them into His perfect likeness? No, today many North American Churches have become nothing more than trash compactors. I mean how many churches do you know in North America today that would have voted Moses into membership? Much less a leader of the church. Not when it was a well-known fact that he was a murderer and had just come in from hiding in the wilderness forty years. How many churches do you know that would have kept David in office? Let alone allowed to continue to be king after his fall! Do you want to know what I believe most churches would have done?

First, they probably would have ripped the crown off of his head then used the crown to give him a real royal crowning! But friends lets face facts, according to God's Word, David deserved a stoning not a scepter! How many of us would have allowed Peter to be the keynote speaker on the Day of Pentecost, especially after he had denied even knowing Christ some fifty days before? (see Seventh-day Adventist Comm. 6 p.127) Lets face it, Peter deserved a punch not Pentecost! How many churches would have voted Paul as an Apostle? Or would allow him to be A Bible writer of 1/2 of the New Testament? I sometimes believe that we got God's plan for Salvation all backwards. What we need is the eyes of Jesus.

You see, Jesus looks at people and sees treasures. We look at people and see trash. Jesus looks at people and sees future possibilities. We look at people and see his or hers failures.

Let me give you an example of what I'm saying. Turn with me again to our scripture in John 21 starting with 15 thru Verse 17. Here we find Jesus asking Peter three times if he loved Him. And three times Peter said, "**Yea Lord, Thou KNOWEST that I love Thee.**" And three times Jesus says, "**Feed my Sheep.**"

Friends, in this story we find that not only was Peter forgiven, he was commissioned. Not only pardoned, but ordained. We would have seen a fallen church member, but Jesus sees a preacher.

If Peter were alive today and had made his same mistakes as he did then, would we even allow him to fold the bulletins in the back room once a month? If not that would we at least let him help set up a few chairs on fellowship Sabbath? But preacher? Would we have asked Peter to be our preacher?

It was 1979 in Harlem, NY. When a young energetic preacher rolls into town to give an evangelistic series. Many said that this white preacher would never come to that side of Harlem. But they did not know Pastor Ron Halverson Sr., yet. Ron Halverson had grew up on the streets of NY and Harlem. He knew of the trash out on the streets. But he also knew of Gods treasures of out there. He had been told he could not go visiting that it would be too dangerous. But Pastor Ron went anyway.



Ron Halverson likes to tell the story that whenever he goes to visit anyone, he carries his Bible up by his heart. That way if someone tries to shoot or stab him they would have to go through Gen., Ex., Lev., all the way to Rev. to ever get to him. And who knows, maybe somewhere in there they might find the Lord.

Friends, Ron Halverson knows that if he follows God's leading, he'll be lead to treasures, God's treasures. And that happened in 1979. Let me tell you the story that I once heard Ron Halverson Jr. give about his dad.

During one of Ron Halverson Sr. nightly meetings in NY, there was this lady coming night after night, her name was, Goldie. He said Goldie had this huge afro. It had been painted, what else, but gold. She was one of names on Pastor's Ron visiting list one day. Many of the members tried to persuade Ron Halverson not to visit Goldie because she was a known prostitute. Ron Halverson still to this day does not know how they knew she was a prostitute, but he said they knew. He knocked on her door after he got there and a voice asked, "Yea, who is it?" "It's Pastor Ron from the Bible meetings you are coming each night. I've come to talk to you about Jesus."

Shortly the door opened and man shot out with his head down so as not to be recognized. Ron said if he really wanted to be mean he would have said, hey mister, your wife told me I would find you here.

Friends, do you realize that here is a Seventh-day Adventist preacher in a house of prostitution? I wonder if he was ever afraid that a brother or sisters from the church seeing him leave a place like that? Would have you?

Goldie invited Pastor Ron in. She said, "Preacher, you shouldn't have come here. You know what I do for a living!" Ron said, "Yea, I Know. But Goldie, I just came here to tell you how happy I am that you are coming to the nightly meetings. And I also wanted to tell you that Jesus loves you. And I love you too."

"Pastor Ron" Goldie says, "I've fallen a long way from the Lord. But preacher there is a song that I remember. A song I learned way back when I was a child in Sunday School." Ron says, "Yea, Goldie, what song is that?" With tears in her eyes Goldie begins to sing, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong, they are weak but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so."

Ron sat there with tears in his eyes and says, "That's right Goldie, Jesus does loves you and He wants you to come back home."

When Ron Halverson Jr. gave this story to a group of pastor and evangelist, you could have heard a pin drop. Here were the big guns of the church, ones with their on stories, yet this one touched their hearts. He concluded the story by telling us that Goldie gave her heart to God right there in a room of a house of prostitutes. And there Jesus found one of His many treasures and called her home.

Friends, Jesus did not die up on that human garbage dump of a hill to save a few. He died there to save all! Goldie the prostitute became a Bible Worker and forty people where baptized her first year of being a "Recycled Christian."



(Pick up trashcan and looking inside)

Wow! There is that man again. The one who has a problem with drugs and liquor. Even heard he sold drugs. He played the drums once in a Rock and Roll Band. I also heard he grew up in the church but left it when he started noticing girls. He's where he belongs, in the trashcan.

What's that? Some woman is witnessing to him! Why waste her time. He's good for nothing. What now, they are baptizing him. Oh he may look like a Christian on the outside but give him time. He'll walk right out that back door just like so many others do. Now what? A preacher! They made him a preacher. Never! There must be some mistake. Someone in the conference needs to have his or her head examined. He'll never make it as preacher. How could that man grow up to become a preacher for the Hope/Texarkana Seventh-day Adventist Church? Lord You and I both know what that man has done in the past. Surely You still have his record some place.

Aren't you glad that is nothing God cannot fix! Aren't you glad there isn't a place where Jesus will not go to find His treasures? What makes the story about Goldie so important to me is because at the same time God was in Harlem, NY finding one of His treasures He was in Marshall, TX finding me, literally standing by a garbage dump. And he called me home too.

How about you? Were you ever in the garbage dump of sin before? Is there some past record of you somewhere? Or did His death on the cross - cross out your sinful record?

Do you believe in recycling? Well let me tell you that my God sure does.